

Local Perspectives on Poverty and Development

Belaynesh Begajo

Abstract

Participation is though central for sustainable development and poverty reduction, it is the most abused, misused and rhetorically spoken development concept. However, in the recent times, it is widely promoted not only as a means for poverty reduction and sustainable development but is largely recognized as an end on its own right. Following the recent shifts in development thinking, the spectrum of community participation is broadened beyond the conventional objective of information extraction and project efficiency to empowering the poor and marginalized; through participation people will control over matters that affect their lives.

This paper is based on field studies and experiences to demonstrate the centrality of participation to empower local people. Participatory poverty assessment carried out in five districts of SNNPRS was the main source of information for this paper. The assessment made using various participatory tools and techniques, involved 42 focused groups organized on the basis of sex, age, agro-climatic zone, urban-rural setting and socially and culturally excluded social groups (or minority).

The assessment revealed that poverty is multidimensional and specific. People defined, measured and analyzed poverty as they lived in for decades. They also analyzed and measured progresses in poverty reduction and development in their local context. The focused group generated its own indicators and evaluated the performance of local governance and gender situations. Apart from its community empowerment goal, the assessment indicated the methodological soundness of participatory approach for research. The paper concludes that communities' perspective on their situation is not only multidimensional and comprehensive but also legitimate that the policy makers and development actors should take into their accounts. In addition, the paper suggests that institutionalized forms of public participation in the mainstreams of public institutions, NGOs, research and academic institutions is important to create empowered and informed citizens.

1. Introduction

Participatory approach for development was recently recognized as instrumental to empower the poor and enable them to control over issues that affect their lives. Following the PRSP principles and processes, governments and donors heightened their efforts to mainstream public participation in policies and programs; though the type of participation observed in the process damaged the hope for better ownership and partnership in implementation. Institutionalized and sustained participation of the general public, CSOs, CBOs, and other development actors are highly important for the quality of governance and democratization process.

Participatory poverty assessment [PPA] that ActionAid Ethiopia conducted in five districts of Dawuro zone was the basis for this paper. The data was collected and analyzed using various PRA¹ tools and techniques that various community groups such as women; youth; adult men and women; and socially and culturally excluded minority groups applied to analyze their situations and perspectives on poverty and development.

The primary objective of the PPA was to get the priorities, opinions, preferences of the local communities to incorporate in the local government's short and medium development strategies that the districts intended to plan. The assessment had also broader goals of empowering the community and paves the way for institutionalized participation in the context of district level decentralization, which opened the opportunity to narrow the distance between citizens and government. On top of this, it was to inform and share the major concerns of the poor and marginalized to policy makers and wider development actors.

This paper is organized in the following order. Section 2 will briefly discusses the objectives of the paper followed by the methodology in section 3, where the process, participatory tools and techniques applied to collect, analyze and compile the data will be provided. Section 4 will provide a brief background on participatory approaches. Section 5, which is the main body of the paper, presents and discusses the results while the final section will offer some concluding remarks and recommendations.

¹ PRA does not necessarily mean participatory rural appraisal. It is a label for a family of approaches and methods to enable people to share, enhance and analyze their knowledge of life and conditions, to plan and act [Robert Chamber, 1992]

2. Objectives

The main purpose of this paper is to share communities' perspective on poverty and development, and inform wider section of the society that participation of the general public is not only a means to realize good governance and sustainable development but is basic human rights that need to be promoted. Specifically, it aims,

- To share the field studies and experiences on participatory process to wider development actors, institutions and organizations
- To demonstrate the rich knowledge and experiences of local people on their situations of poverty; and contribute to our understandings and perspectives on poverty
- To inform perspectives of local people on poverty and development to policy makers and development actors
- To demonstrate the methodological and practical soundness of participatory methods and approaches and its complementarities to conventional methods of research
- To highlight the importance to promote institutionalized participation in public institutions, NGOs, research and academic institutions as a means to create the empowered and informed citizen.

3. Methodology

Methods for qualitative data collection and analysis, as for quantitative, depends on the purpose of the data collection. The process of data collection was not extractive in the conventional sense of dominating, alienating and considering the people being studied as objects. It was participatory where the community took control over and played active roles in shaping the outcomes of the processes. In the process, community analyzed their situations, identified problems and priorities.

3.1. Sample Site Selection

All of the five districts of the zone were included in the assessment. Sample sites were selected on purposive basis. Accordingly, a total of 14 sample villages were selected on the basis of agro-climate, urban-rural and socially and culturally excluded minority groups. Proportions to their population size, sample villages were distributed between districts; and rural-urban, minority groups within districts.

3.2. Training

Facilitation for qualitative data collection and analysis requires high level of training to achieve good results from the participation process. Ten days training on various skills of facilitation was given to 47

facilitators, who were selected from the districts. Most trainees were government employees and they had a minimum of 12 plus and above schooling. The training included theoretical, own [group] exercises and field practice with communities. The training given by highly skilled and experienced practitioners in the field, was largely focused on,

- ❖ Basic participatory tools and techniques
- ❖ Participatory principles and values
- ❖ Required attitudes and behaviors
- ❖ Skills of facilitation, recording, analyzing and reporting, team roles etc

Three facilitators were deployed in each village along with a coordinator at district to facilitate the data collection, recording, compiling and reporting processes, which took about 20 days. A team who provided the training had a regular and close supervision to each village for backstopping/supports. A field guide was also given to the facilitators before they departure to field to assist the process though it was not a technical fix.

3.3. Methods of data collection

Focused group discussion technique was mainly employed to get comprehensive and diversified views of the local people. Three focused groups, such as women group, youth group and adult men and women group or mixed group were formed in each village. The number of participants in each group was pre-determined to be 10-15, though in most cases participants attended in each focused group were larger in number than planned. Composition of the participant was made in such a way that it would reflect diversities of a village. Few local elders of both sexes and other key informant groups were also contacted to verify and triangulate with the information generated by the groups.

The PRA tools and techniques, which are largely visual/pictorial and simple in technical terms to the majority of illiterate rural people, were used to facilitate the PPA data collection process. Data collection was framed on four broadly identified thematic issues such as,

- Poverty and well-being
- Socio-economic problems and priorities
- Gender and Harmful traditional practices
- Governance and Institutions.

The thematic issues and specific guiding questions are provided in Annex. Issues specific to the socially and culturally marginalized groups were also included separately included in the main guiding questions to get the views of minorities in separate manner.

A number of PRA tools were employed to facilitate the process, for example, wealth ranking and scoring, problem tree, flow diagram, force field analysis, problem matrix, pie chart, cobweb, and so on.

3.4. Required attitudes and behaviors

As opposite to the conventional approach to social research, participatory research is based on the premises that knowledge is the result of social processes, debates and interaction among different actors with different perceptions and interests [Andy Norton et al, 2001]. Facilitation of participatory requires basic principles and norms. Thus the attitudes and behaviors of facilitators received high attention during the training. It was strongly emphasized that the roles of the researchers and peoples being researched should be reversed in the facilitation process. This idea was clearly conveyed to the facilitators in such a way that they facilitator, not dominator; convener and catalyst, not a controller; listen to people, not lecture; handover the stick to the community to analyze their situation, not to impose their perceptions and knowledge

4. Background Review

In the history of development process, practitioners and research/academic institutions had been advocating participation of the general public for various purposes. In the late 1960s and early 70s, it was dominantly advocated for project efficiency, effectiveness and cost sharing. Organizations and governments adopted legislations and declarations to reinforce its operationalization. As cited in Andrea Cornwall, the US Foreign Act of 1973 required that all development programs and projects financed by its development assistances should involve participation of project beneficiaries from inception of project planning to implementation to ensure that development benefits are fairly shared among the intended beneficiaries, which other bilateral aid agencies supported and followed suit.

In 1980s, participation was however, understood and practiced in broader perspective. The mainstream participation of 1970s of involving people in activities initiated by external development agencies was challenged on the ground that people should not be passive on matters that affect their lives. In 1980s, it was widely supported that participation should be self-initiated; as opposite to external imposition. The point was that people should initiate their own agendas and, determine processes and outcomes. Associated to self-initiated participation, concepts like empowerment, partnership, ownership were heavily spoken in 1980s. The efforts of Paulo Freire [1978] and Participatory Action Research movements had also contributed to the spread self-initiated concepts of participation.

In the 1990s, the spectrum of participation was much widened to the extent that it was recognized as one of basic human rights. As cited in Andrea Cornwall, Lister argued,

....the right of participation is decision making in social, economic, cultural and political life should be included in the nexus of human rights.... Citizenship as participation can be seen as representing an expression of human agency in the political arena, broadly defined; citizenship as rights enables people to act as agents [1998:228].

As to the research and academic institutions was concerned on public participation, it was largely for methodological reasons. In explicit terms, pioneers of the participatory approaches in the early 1960s and 70s had intended to fill the gaps of conventional methods of social research such as household survey methods. In this regard, various streams of participatory researches are accredited to the contemporary understandings and applications of participatory researches including, Activist Participatory Researches of 1960s, Field Research on Farming Systems in 1970s, Agro-ecosystem Analysis early 1980s, Applied Anthropology of 1980s, Rapid Rural Appraisal of late 1970s, Participatory Rural Appraisal of late 1980s, Participatory poverty Assessment of the early 1990s etc

5. Local Perspectives on Poverty and Development –Major Findings

5.1. Perceptions of Poverty

Perceptions of poverty from poor people's perspective are comprehensive and reflective of their actual life experiences. The assessment revealed the fact that poverty is multidimensional and context specific. Poverty defined by 42 focused groups indicated that poverty is a phenomenon arising at individual [intra-household], household and community levels. Variations and similarities in perception were also observed between sex, age, agro-climate, socially excluded groups and urban-rural settings. At the expense of specificity, here we divided communities' perception of poverty into six broad dimensions: (1) denial of basic human rights, (2) ignorance/lack of knowledge/lack of information, (3) unemployment conditions, (4) inaccessibility to/lack of basic social services, (5) insufficient income and assets, and (6) malnutrition /food shortage. Brief discussions with respect to each aspect will be as follows:

Denial of Basic Human rights

As one of the dimensions of poverty, denial of basic human rights came in different forms of phrases like,.....'the poor are socially not accepted', 'suppression of women', 'socially distained and unheard',

‘socially marginalized’, ‘lacks community acceptance’, ‘influenced by culture and religion influences’, ‘denied of participation’, ‘physically and socially isolated’..... and so on. See Table 1 for sample definitions.

In this particular context it is important to understand who is denying the rights of the poor? The tone of all expressions in the definition indicated that primarily people’s own values and norms, cultural and religious factors are at the top of the list. This shows that apart from the policies and legal dimensions, ‘people’s own politics’ are significantly contributing to the perpetuation of poverty.

Ignorance or lack of knowledge/lack of information

This is the other important dimension of poverty emerged in the group analysis. According to their description, ignorance or lack of knowledge means inefficient use of time and resources, the attitude of indolence/laziness and hatred towards work, drunkardness, and lack of vision. It was also described as lack of practical skills, lack of informal knowledge, lack of information and exposure, which in effect perpetuated their old way of doing and being. The definition given by one of mixed groups illustrates this,

Poverty is illness, ignorance, no knowledge of family planning, dictated by cultural and religious influences, lack of knowledge of proper cultivation to preserve the soil, lack of cash, and lack of knowledge of modern cattle rising [Koisha Wololi village in Mareka district, adult men and women group from menja tribes].

Lack of /inaccessibility to basic social services

This aspect of poverty is characterized by illiteracy, frequent illness, child mortality, lack of pure water and so on. In the conventional analysis, inaccessibility to basic social services as indicators of poverty is captured in various ways such as education status of family members, number of children attending school, episodes of illness of family heads, distance to basic social services, etc.

Poverty as lack of assets and incomes

This is the central, in most cases, the only dimensions of poverty that was analyzed and reported in the income/consumption based definition of poverty. As we learned from the PPA, income/consumption data is relevant in urban areas where the economy is relatively monetized and regular/smooth pattern of consumption is predominant. While in the rural context, assets of various sorts such as land, farm products, livestock etc are more important.

Unemployment Condition

Unemployment as poverty dimension is highly emphasized in the youth groups. They linked unemployment with poverty from various angles. Unemployment means hopelessness, inferiority, feeling of sub-humanness etc. For instance, one of the definitions given by a youth group clearly signifies its importance in poverty analysis:

Poverty means unemployment, a life walking in the dark, it is a physical death, incapability, living as sub-human, it is just like living in an abyss, and it is just like chronic illness but not killing one [A youth group from Mariguta village in Mareka District].

Table 1: Local Definitions of Poverty as Perceived by Different Social Groups

	District	Village type	Group	Poverty perception by the group
1	Mareka	Urban	Mixed	Poverty means denial of <u>women's right</u> to engage in any productive work, it is <u>suppression of women</u> and minorities, <u>high child death</u> , inaccessibility to health care services, illiteracy and gender bias
2	Mareka	Urban	Youth	Poverty means bearing too many children, <u>absence of essential institutions</u> , <u>hopelessness and inferiority</u> , illiteracy and destitution, <u>denial of rights</u> , <u>suppression of women and minorities</u>
3	Mareka	Socially and cultural excluded group [menja tribe]	Women	<u>Dictated by cultural and religious influences</u> , bearing many children, early marriage, illness, illiteracy, lack of cash
4	Mareka	'Dega'	Youth	Poverty means <u>unemployment</u> , a life walking in the dark, it is a physical death, incapability, it living as sub-human, it is just like living in an abyss, it is just like chronic illness but not killing one.
5	Mareka	Qolla	Mixed	Poor is the one who has no money to seek treatment when sick, has <u>nothing to eat and affected by malnutrition</u> , has no property at all, standard of the people living below the people.
6	Tocha	Qolla	Mixed	Poverty means lack of capacity to get one own cloth, unable to eat balanced <u>diet</u> , unable to form family because of lack of resources; has no house and is dependent on others, is one who is <u>socially disdained and unheard</u> ; stigmatized in genealogy, skill and trade.
7	Esera	Dega	Mixed	Poverty means living in dark with no access to <u>light</u> , <u>clean water</u> , <u>transport</u> , <u>education</u> , <u>health services</u> , has no <u>farm oxen</u> , no adequate farm <u>land</u> , sheep, goat, horse, mule even chicken; and has no disposable <u>income</u> , <u>living in destitute house</u> , lives in hand-to-mouth condition, indolence, <u>destined to be poor</u> .
8	Esera	Dega	Women	Poverty means illiteracy, <u>denial of community participation</u> , <u>marginalization</u> , owns no wealth and

	District	Village type	Group	Poverty perception by the group
				property.
9	Lomma	Qolla	Women	A poor is the one whose <u>rights are not respected</u> in the community; poverty is manifested in illness, famine; destitution, owning no farm land, male chauvinism, <u>ignorant about time</u> utilization, less courage for work, <u>misutilization of resources</u> .
10	Lomma	Dega	Women	A poor is the one unemployed, owns nothing, labors for Qalicha [<u>traditional beliefs or believe on witchcraft</u>] wastes his productive time, hates work, drunkard, denial of women right and suppression.
11	Lomma	Dega	Youth	A poor is one who has <u>no say in the community</u> , <u>socially marginalized</u> , owns nothing, lives in distress, and <u>lacks access to resources</u> .
12	Gena	Dega	Women	Poor are <u>socially marginalized</u> , <u>lacks community acceptance</u> and participation, lacks access to services like market and financially constrained.

Source: Taken from AAE's PPA source document[©]

Malnutrition/inaccessibility to adequate food

This is highly emphasized in the low land parts of the villages. It was expressed in terms of shortage of food, unbalanced diet, drought and migration. Malnutrition is a critical aspects in the Ethiopian context where more than 45 percent of the population are food insecure [EPRDF, 2003]. Stunting and wasting of children are usually taken as proxy variables to consider malnutrition aspects of household poverty.

Apart from such broad dimensions, the specificity of poverty was also observed with respect to gender, age, agro-climatic zones, urban-rural, and socially and culturally excluded groups. Sample definitions given in the Table 1 indicates that relatively women groups were more concerned about the denial of rights [for instance, see definition 1, 2, 7, and 8], as compared to, for instance, the youth group who emphasized unemployment [see definition 3]. On the other hand, the adult men and women groups were relatively concerned about the issues related to food security, assets/incomes [land, oxen...] and basic social services. Emphases in the definitions of socially and cultural excluded groups [menaj and mena tribes] gave strong weight to issues like marginalization, denial of rights, exclusion from basic social services etc.

[©] We would like to thank a team of consultants, particularly Ato Gashaw Asfaw from Addis Ababa University [DTRC], who consolidated and translated the Amharic version of original PPA source data into English version.

One of the implication of community perception analysis on poverty is that it is technically difficult, if not impossible, to capture such multiple aspects of poverty with the conventional household survey methods alone. In essence this means that the fully informed and complete public policy and strategy design requires priori analysis of wider perspective on the issue including policies.

5.2. Measures of Poverty

For a number of decades poverty is measured by applying the money-metric approach, which solely uses household income/consumption data as the only indicator of poverty and peoples living standard. National governments, donors and policy makers largely relied on such narrowly defined poverty measures. Several literatures in the field witnessed that such income/consumption based approach to poverty measure was used with little attention to alternative ones, such as local measures, [see Peter Cutler, 1984; Ravi Knabur, 1987; Larry Sawers, 1988; Datt and Ravallion, 1992; Ravallion and Huppi, 1994; Blackwood and Lynch, 1994]. Policies and programs designed on the basis of such narrowly defined, measured and analyzed poverty reports lead to faulty decisions. In many instance it was argued that such narrow perspective on poverty indirectly contributes to the perpetuation and increment of poverty. In line with this argument, Keith Griffin et al had to say the following,

Despite the time, energy and ingenuity that have been lavished on theories of economic development and on the design of formal models intended either to describe or help governments plan the development process, it appears that not as much light as one would hope has been shed so far on why poor people remain poor. Perhaps one reason for this is that the building blocks of most theories and models are faulty, [Griffin K. and Rahman Khan Z, 1978].

This does not by any means to say that the money-metric approach is not working or the alternative approaches are better. The point is that the consumption/income based method should be complemented by qualitative and participatory approaches, which gives broader view and conception on poverty.

Poverty is relative and depends on the context and ones perception. Participatory approach revealed that community standard of measuring their welfare is different from the conventional ones in various ways. Communities have their own rich experiences and knowledge of differentiating poor from the non-poor. Using wealth ranking method the groups categorized their respective communities [total kebele residents] into four segments of living standards: rich, medium, poor and very poor; and determined the numbers of people falling under each category. Indicators used to categorize peoples in

such order varied between rural and urban, and agro-climate zones. In the urban setting, incomes and income generating activities such as small businesses, cash on hand etc were more important than assets. This implies that the income/consumption based approach to poverty measure is appropriate in urban context where the economic system is relatively monetized and regular pattern of consumption is common.

But in the rural context, assets such as land sizes, number and type of livestock, amount of various types of farm products, availability and number of commercial plants and trees, etc were predominantly used to differentiate the poor from the no-poor. Rural community's perspective of living standard measure is consistent with the nature of the [rural] economy where the traditional economic system, irregular pattern of consumption, imperfect information of the consumption and income data are notable features. For instance, most focused groups in rural village used the following poverty measuring criterion:

- Land size [with various qualifications such as fertility]
- Number and types of livestock [particularly number of farm oxen and milk cows are common in across villages and groups]
- Amount of various types of farm products in a year [Type of farm products vary between the agro-climatic zones. For instance, bean is more important in highland while maize is more common in lowland...]
- Various commercial plants and trees [eucalyptus and bamboo trees are common in highland while bananas, papaya, coffee in the lowland climatic zones]
- Type of house [Residence house from corrugated iron sheet]
- Number of /existence of employed family members [less common]
- Amount of cash on hand [more common in urban setting and along the main road sides convenient for business activities]

Number of people estimated under each category in a village varied between groups, though not significant. The purpose here is not to discuss about how much people are poor or not poor; but to indicate the methodological significance of people's own measurement of poverty.

5.3. Community Analysis of Causes and Effects of Poverty

Causes and effects of poverty are most entangled in nature and difficult to separate one from the other. In econometric model analysis, endogenous-exogenous variable argument is what analysts use to separate causes from effects. In the lights of qualitative data analysis, however, econometric modeling approach should be taken with some caveats. The first of which is that econometric models do not fully capture the multiple causes of poverty. In most household survey data analysis of poverty, variables

limited to household characteristics, such as number of family members, age and education status of household head, household assets and income, income generating activities are commonly used.[See Coulombe H and McKay A., 1996; Glewwe, 1991; Kyereme and Thorbeck, 1991; Mekonnen Taddess, 1999; Arne Bigsten et al, 1999]. The second point of concern with econometric model is that it usually drops variables assumed to be exogenous, which would wider policy implications.

Community analysis of the causes and effects of poverty are highly important in terms of complementing household based data analysis and prompting further studies. The empowering effect of engaging community in cause-effect analysis of poverty is significant as it enables them to look at themselves as to what are the causes for their situations; and analyze who and what should be done to change it.

Using various participatory tools and techniques such as force field, problem tree, problem solving matrix, the group identified and analyzed the relationship of causes and effects of poverty in their lives. For instance, in the case of force field analysis, communities draw a line on the ground and assumed one side of the line as below the earth to represent the causes/root causes as hidden below the earth and the other side of the line as above the earth to represent effects of poverty [or symptoms of poverty]. While in the problem tree analysis, the communities draw a tree and visualized three things in it: core problem represented by trunk, the root causes represented by roots inside the earth and symptoms of the problem represented by branches.

Causes and effects analysis of poverty was made at three levels: intra-household, household and community. Variables, such as large family size, illiteracy, drought, lack of farm oxen, small land size etc were identified as cause of household poverty. Econometric approach proved that these variables are significant, [see Coulombe H and McKay A., 1996; Glewwe, 1991; Kyereme and Thorbeck].

Intra-household poverty causes were in glimpse reflected in the women and youth groups, though further assessments is needed to have a deep understanding on such variation of poverty at individual levels.

On the other hand, suggested causes of poverty at community levels included inaccessibility to basic social services and infrastructures, influences of various harmful traditional practices, etc.

5.4. Communities' Perception on Trend of Poverty and Development

Community's perception on trends of poverty and development was analyzed by community's own generated indicators of progress/regress in their situations. The groups compared situation at the

beginning of the 10 years ago with situations at the time of data collection. The types and numbers of indicators used by groups were diverse and reflective of their perceptions on poverty and development. Wide ranges of indicators, ranging from 4 to 20 were applied by each group to measure changes at household and community levels.

The scoring methods were used to compare trends of progress in poverty reduction and development. With reference to situations at the beginning of 10 years ago, group scored maximum value for the best improved current situations and least value for the deteriorated current situations as compared to the situations 10 years ago.

For relatively unchanged situation, the score value remained the same as the value attached to the situation 10 years ago. For comparison purpose, the score values were grouped into three scales: improved, deteriorated and unchanged.

Table 2, shows perception on trends of poverty aggregated by major indicators. The Table shows us three things,

First the indicators grouped into 17, which are consistent with perception analysis of poverty in section 5.1. The second point is the frequency numbers corresponding to the indicators that explain the importance of the indicators [see 2nd to 5th column in the Table]. For instance, health/or related indicator [as shown in the 8th row] was used by all 42 groups [see the total column] to measure the progress in poverty reduction. Of the 42 groups, 17 perceived that health situation is now deteriorated as compared to 10 years ago, 20 believed that it is improved this time than 10 years ago, and 5 claimed that health situation remain unchanged.

Table 2: Perceptions on Trends of poverty reduction and Development

Trend Indicators of Poverty and Development	Number of groups claiming				By percentage		
	Deteriorations	Improvements	unchanged	Total	% Deteriorate	% Improved	% unchanged
1. Cattle Disease/veterinary services	9	9	4	22	40.91	40.91	18.18
2. Telephone/electricity/town development	1	1	5	7	14.29	14.29	71.43
3. Credit Services/financial constraints	2	0	6	8	25.00	0.00	75.00
4. Deforestation/environmental protection	11	7	1	19	57.89	36.84	5.26
5. Education and training service	4	22	7	33	12.12	66.67	21.21
6. Farming methods/input supply	6	5	2	13	46.15	38.46	15.38
7. Harmful traditional practices	8	18	2	28	28.57	64.29	7.14
8. Health Service/maternal and child death/ Episodes human of disease	17	20	5	42	40.48	47.62	11.90
9. Income/asset level	2	3	0	5	40.00	60.00	0.00
10. Market price of farm products	2	2	1	5	40.00	40.00	20.00
11. Rights/exclusion/gender/abduction/ participation/women's workload	3	13	3	19	15.79	68.42	15.79
12. Population Pressure/family planning	1	4	0	5	20.00	80.00	0.00
13. Prevalence of Thieves/security	2	4	0	6	33.33	66.67	0.00
14. Yields of production/food insecurity/ drought/land fertility/land scarcity/land tax	29	2	3	34	85.29	5.88	8.82
15. Road and transport	2	19	5	26	7.69	73.08	19.23
16. Unemployment rate	3	1	1	5	60.00	20.00	20.00
17. Water Supply	5	9	13	27	18.52	33.33	48.15
Average	6	8	4	18	35.20	45.72	19.08

Source: Aggregated on the bases of AAE's PPA source document

The third point is comparison of current situations with situations ten years ago in percentage values. For instance, by looking at the 6th to 8th column with respect to the same indicator, we can say that health situation is improved now for about 48 percent of the population than it was 10 years ago, but it is deteriorated or remains unchanged for about 52 percent of the total population. By looking at the last row in the Table, we can explain the general situations on progress of poverty reduction and development. It shows that there is now improvement in the living standards for about 46 percent of the total population in the zone than it was 10 years ago, or the living standard get deteriorated or remain unchanged for about 54 percent of the population now than it was 10 years ago. Depending on the agro-ecological difference, sex, age and social exclusions reflected in the group, there were though wide variations in perception of their situations.

This shows that community's perspective on the progress of development and poverty reduction are important instrument to validate the government and other development actors measures of progress in their development efforts.

5.5. Women's view on Situations of Gender

Applying the same tools and techniques as for poverty and development in section 5.4., women groups evaluated the situation of gender. In this case, women group alone was made to evaluate the progress of changes of gender situations. Similar to the analysis in section 5.4, 14 women groups showed their perspectives on the trends of gender situations [equality/inequality] in their local contexts. They used their own indicators to evaluate the progress in gender situations.

Table 3: Women's perception on Trends of gender Situations

Name of Districts	Number of groups claiming				By percentage		
	Improvement	unchanged	Deterioration	Total	% improved	% unchanged	%Deteriorated
Mareka	4	2	1	7	58.62	27.59	13.79
Tocha	8	1	1	9	83.33	5.56	11.11
Esera	7	2	0	9	77.78	22.22	0
Lomma	6	1	3	9	64.71	5.88	29.41
Gena	5	1	2	8	69.49	8.74	21.77
Average	5	2	1	8	63.28	21.66	15.06

Source: Aggregated on the bases of AAE's PPA source document

Table 3 is the summary of perception on trends of gender, aggregated at district levels. On average the group used eight indicators to evaluate progresses of gender situations in their village and beyond. As we interpreted above for trends of poverty in Table 2, the last row in the Table 3 indicates that more than 63 percent of gender problems were perceived as improved, about 22 percent remain untouched and about 15 percent of the problem were aggravated over the last ten years time. Comparisons between woredas indicate that most of the gender problems were perceived as shown improvement this time as it was ten years ago.

5.6. Communities' Evaluation of Local Governance

The group generated its own governance indicators to analyze and evaluate the performance of their respective kebele administrations. With respect to the indicators, the group scored a maximum value of 10 to the best performed governance indicators and zero to the worst

Table 4: Community's Evaluation of Local Governance

Governance Indictors as defined by the community	Average Score out of 10	Frequency
1. Prevention of crime	5.67	6
2. Administration capacity	5.14	42
3. Bureaucratic efficiency/ timeliness	4.83	6
4. Corruption/bribes/public resource use	3.09	11
5. Courtesy/respect/cordiality to the community	4.31	8
6. Delivery of justice to the general public	4.55	30
7. Delivery of justice to the Minorities	1.80	15
8. Gender sensitivity	4.33	3
9. Impartiality	5.74	35
10. Listening to peoples' compliant/grievances/case	4.05	32
11. Mobilizing community and commitment to development	4.07	14
12. Motivation/commitment at Emergency	1.00	2
13. Public acceptability	3.75	4
14. Relation and closeness to the community	5.18	36
Average	4.58	17.43

Source: Aggregated on the bases of AAE's PPA source document

As Table 4 shows, the group used 14 major indicators, which were aggregated from all villages. Corresponding to each indicator, the average scored values [out of 10] and the frequency it was used across the groups is indicated. Similar to section 5.4 and 5.5, the numbers corresponding to each

indicator shows the importance of the indicator. For instance, all 42 groups have used administrative capacity to measure the performance of the administrations. On the other hand, the average score values in the second column show the performance measures attached to each indicator. For instance, the administration's performance with respect to impartiality [5.74], prevention of crime [5.67] and relationship and closeness with the community [5.18] are perceived well performed. While, with respect to, for instance, motivation and commitment at emergency [1], delivery of justice [1.8], and corruption/bribe/public resource use [3.09], the administration performance are perceived bad or worse.

6. Conclusions and Recommendation

Participatory poverty assessment conducted in five districts with 42 focused groups revealed the fact that poverty is multidimensional as well as specific across various social groups. Poverty was also explained as a phenomena arising at individual, household and community levels. Perception analysis revealed six broad dimension of poverty, such as 'denial of basic human rights', 'lack of knowledge/information', 'lack of/inaccessibility to basic social services', 'low income and assets', 'unemployment conditions', and 'malnutrition/food insecurity'. The specificity nature of poverty was explained in perception variation between sexes, age, urban-rural and agro-climatic zones.

Perception on causes of poverty was varied depending on the unit of analysis community use. For instance the causes for individual poverty are different from causes for household poverty or causes for community level poverty. But apart from the external factors such as existence bad policies, lack of basic social services, etc, factors endogenous [internal] to the community such as people's own harmful values, norms and practice are found significant reinforcing factors for the perpetuation of poverty.

Communities are able to generate their own local indicators to monitor and measure the progresses in poverty reduction, improvements in gender situations and improvements in the performance of local governments, which demonstrates the importance of having institutionalized mechanisms of involving local people to get their feedbacks on the performance of policies and strategies.

Large numbers of practical experiences and literatures in the field testifies that peoples participation has at least two goals : one is to take participation as a means to empower the citizen and ensure sustained development, and the second would be recognition of participation itself as an end as it is one of basic human right. Cognizant to these, we would like to suggest that governments and NGOs need have a sustained approaches to participate the poor and marginalized and take their views into policies and strategies. Ensuing to the recognition of the rich knowledge and experience of the local people, we also suggest that institutionalized forms of public participation in the mainstreams of public

institutions, NGOs, research and academic institutions is important to create empowered and informed citizens. The long-term benefits of encouraging and institutionalizing public participations particularly in the mainstreams of academic courses and conventional research methods is significantly worthy in terms of enriching the understandings and perspectives on local situations.

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Annex

Table 1: Thematic Issues and Participatory Methods Applied

No	Thematic issues	Methods [tools/techniques]
1	Poverty and well-being <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How poverty is perceived/defined locally - How measured - Causes and effects of poverty - Copying mechanisms - Trend analysis - Suggested strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussion with key informant groups - Wealth ranking and scoring - matrix ranking - flow diagram/problem tree/problem solving matrix - Trend analysis/scoring
2	Socio-economic problems and priorities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Issues related agriculture [farming, food security, livestock, government tax, market issues] - public services and infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussion with key informant - Pie chart - Matrix ranking - flow diagram/problem tree - Trend analysis
3	Gender and Harmful Traditional practices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - gender problems and priorities - Trend of improvements or .. - Women's workload analysis - Harmful Traditional practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussion with key informants - Pie chart - Cobweb - Problem matrix
4	Institutions and Governance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community based institution analysis - Performance evaluation of kebele administration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussion with key informants - Venn diagram - Scoring
5	Project identifications and priorities	- Matrix/table
6	Dream map, which the group develop on the basis of current map that they do at beginning of the process [the dream map proxies the communities vision]	- Mapping
7	Minority issues -apart from the above issues, socially and culturally excluded groups were facilitated on specific issues related to their exclusion, causes and effects of their exclusion, suggested solution....	Mainly problem solving matrix

Note: The distribution of sample villages between rural, urban and minority groups were 10, 2 and 2 respectively; while between districts it was: 4, 3, 3, 2 and 2 in the order of Mareka, Gena, Esera, Tocha and Lomma.